

Local Authority process for challenge, monitoring support and intervention with Academies and free Schools

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out how the Local Authority undertakes its statutory responsibilities to secure the well-being for all of its children and young people with particular reference to Academies and Free Schools.

Background

The Local Authority is committed to working with all schools across the District in order to improve the life chances and outcomes for all children and young people.

In meeting its statutory duties the Local Authority (LA) is tasked with the monitoring, challenge, support and, where necessary, intervention in state funded schools. A key function of the LA is ensuring that all schools provide a high quality educational experience for the children and young people educated in these schools.

This commitment is set out in a number of key strategic documents including the Council's Education Improvement Strategy which describes the collective approach to partnership working. The school partnerships across the District continue to be strengthened across all phases of learning and all types of schools are represented in the Bradford Partnership, the Bradford Primary Improvement Partnership, the District Achievement Partnership, the Consortium of Nursery Schools and the Catholic Schools' Partnership. There is a commitment from all of the partnerships to work together to secure the very best outcomes for children and young people and the Local Authority deploys significant levels of resources to facilitate and co-ordinate its work with the partnerships.

The LA has responsibilities to Bradford's children and young people that are educated in non-LA maintained schools. The Bradford Achievement Service monitors data and information from these providers to ensure that pupils receive an education that is at least satisfactory and to protect pupils from harm. Should these standards not be met then Bradford Council will raise its concerns promptly with the appropriate authority. It should be emphasised that the Local Authority has a commitment for all schools in Bradford to be at least 'good'. This aspiration is shared by the partnerships of schools. We have also a commitment to eradicating the gap between the performance of Bradford schools and national performance at all key stages. Bradford Council's Children's Services Department is committed to working with its partners to monitor, challenge, support and intervene in all schools in inverse proportion to the success of each school, success being defined in terms of the quality of provision and the outcomes achieved by pupils.

Process

The Local Authority has a well-developed process for monitoring, support, challenge and intervention in maintained schools. This process is set out in its School Prioritisation document.



A key element of this process is the monthly School Improvement Group meeting. At these meetings data and information is considered by senior officers in Children's Services and includes:

- The data held on EduNet / Bradford Schools Online
- RAISEonline
- Recent Ofsted reports
- Recent school review reports (for example from the Bradford Partnership and the Bradford Primary Improvement Partnership reports) prepared by consultants working with schools and collaboratives, where schools have chosen to share these reports
- Other monitoring evidence from teams within Children's Services and other Council Departments or external agencies.

Where the Local Authority identifies issues of concern in an Academy or Free School the Assistant Director (Education and School Improvement/ Access and Inclusion) and/or the senior manager of the Bradford Achievement Service will raise the issues with the Headteacher/Principal and the Chair of Governors (or equivalent) and the Academy/free school sponsor and the appropriate Diocesan body.

In the first instance the Local Authority will write to the Academy/Free School and request a meeting to discuss the issues and agree the respective roles and responsibilities in addressing the issue.

When discussing support and challenge for an Academy/Free School the Local Authority, in agreement with the school, may involve the respective Bradford partnership.

Links with other external agencies

Senior officers from the Local Authority hold regular meetings with regional Ofsted officials and will discuss issues relating to Academies /Free Schools as appropriate.

The Strategic Director, Children's Services also meets with Ofsted's Regional Director and will raise issues of concern about Academies/Free Schools.

The Local Authority also holds regular meetings with representatives from the DfE Academies Division and similarly raises concerns and issues relating to Academies/Free schools.

Where appropriate the Local Authority will also raise issues directly with the Education Funding Agency (for example where there are issues relating to finances/use of resources.)

Conclusion

The Local Authority is committed to an open and transparent dialogue with all of Bradford's schools and will continue to develop collaborative working with the Bradford partnerships to ensure that the collective ambition of all schools becoming 'good' or 'outstanding' is realised. This dialogue will take place with all publicly funded schools, irrespective of status, in order that the Local Authority fulfils its statutory responsibilities to all Bradford's children and young people.



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